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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; ARGENTINE PRESIDENT KIRHCNER TO MEXICO; UK
PM GORDON BROWN TO THE US; PRESS FREEDOM RESTRICTIONS IN ARGENTINA,
VENEZUELA, ECUADOR AND BOLIVIA; 07/31/07

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Key international stories today include the visit of Argentine President Kirchner and First Lady and Senator Cristina Kirchner to Mexico and the signature of a strategic deal between Argentina and Mexico; UK PM Gordon Brown's trip to the US and his meeting with President Bush; and prevailing restrictions on press freedom in Argentina, Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia.

2. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "The Kirchners reach a future deal with Mexico"

Mariana Veron, on special assignment in Mexico, DF, for daily-of-record "La Nacion," writes (07/31) "... Both presidents signed a Treaty of Strategic Association, which, due to the deadlines established, will only be carried out by the next Argentine Government... As a matter of fact, it was Senator Cristina Kirchner who advanced the idea of approaching Calderon, which clearly showed what her foreign policy would be like if she took office - less dependence on Brazil and greater world opening...

"The visit of the presidential couple was a political gesture for the region. The (Argentine) Government) wants its alliance with Mexico to put a brake on Brazil, on which Argentina's economy largely depends.

"Mexico is experiencing something similar in its relationship with the US. Hence it is advisable for it to approach Mercosur, although it may be only flirting. According to sources from the Mexican government, (Felipe) Calderon has sought to approach the Southern countries since taking office and he has found a key partner in Argentina."

- "A strategic game"

Nilvia Naishtat, political columnist of leading "Clarín," writes (07/31) "Kirchner's invitation to Mexico to join Mercosur seems to be part of a strategy that consists of diluting Brazil's power in the region. Kirchner also invited Venezuela.

"It is true that being a NAFTA member, Mexico finds it difficult (to join Mecosur). However, according to expert Diana Tussie, when you feel like it, you always come up with beneficial partnerships.

"Mexico is a strong economy, it has reached deals with more than 60 countries and several companies today promote the bilateral relationship (between Mexico and Argentina), ranging from Techint in Buenos Aires to Telmex in Mexico, DF."

- "Stigma"

Paula Lugones, international columnist of leading "Clarín," writes (07/31) "The purpose of Gordon Brown during his first visit to the US was getting rid of the 'lap dog' stigma, or Tony Blair's submission to the Bush administration's dictates.

"However, the big challenge was doing it without damaging the historic alliance between both countries. He did not kick off the board, it is true, but he ranged from nice public gestures to a private claim for the UK's withdrawal from Iraq. In this way, Brown is already creating his own style, which is closer to the real politik rather than the messianic attitude of his transatlantic counterpart."

- "Intolerance towards the media"

Daily-of-record "La Nación" editorializes (07/31) "During Senator Cristina Kirchner's recent trip to Spain, she excluded Argentine journalists from certain activities and, as has already happened during recent trips, she only granted interviews to the foreign media. Sometimes, she did not take questions that she seemingly considered inopportune. In some other cases, she turned her back on questions emerging from responses she had already given...

"... Other countries are also going through a similar situation. In line with Kirchner's complaints, Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa has said that 'the media should change because they have a big dose of mediocrity, corruption and created interests.' After having cancelled RCTV's license, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has now threatened to do the same with RCTV International if it refuses to air official TV. Bolivian President Evo Morales does not have a better relationship with the media.

"... Information should not be limited to friendly journalists and media, except if one wants to alter the basic rules of freedom,

democracy and harmony."

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